

**We Claim:**

1 A method of treating an animal carcass to reduce a microbial population  
in resulting cut meat, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) treating said carcass with an antimicrobial composition comprising:

(i) an effective antimicrobial amount comprising at least 2 ppm  
of one or more mono- or di-peroxycarboxylic acids having up to 12  
carbon atoms; and

(ii) an effective antimicrobial amount comprising at least 20 ppm  
of one or more carboxylic acids having up to 18 carbon atoms; and

(b) reducing the microbial population.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the population reduction comprises at  
least one  $\log_{10}$  reduction in the microbial population.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the population reduction comprises at  
least two  $\log_{10}$  reduction in the microbial population.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the population reduction comprises at  
least three  $\log_{10}$  reduction in the microbial population.

5. The process of claim 2 wherein the population comprises a human  
pathogen.

6. The process of claim 4 wherein the population comprises *Escherichia*  
*coli*.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the carcass is selected from a muscle  
meat including beef, pork, veal, buffalo or lamb.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the carcass is sea food including scallops, shrimp, crab, octopus, mussels, squid or lobster.

9. The method of claim 1 wherein the carcass is poultry including chicken,  
5 turkey, ostrich, game hen, squab or pheasant.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the peroxycarboxylic acid comprises one or more peroxycarboxylic acids having from 2 to 4 carbon atoms and a peroxycarboxylic acid having from 8 to 12 carbon atoms.

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11. The method of claim 7 wherein the peroxycarboxylic acid comprises peroxyacetic acid and peroxyoctanoic or peroxydecanoic acid, or mixtures thereof.

12. The method of claim 10 wherein the peroxycarboxylic acid having from  
15 2 to 4 carbon atoms is peroxyacetic acid and the peroxycarboxylic acid having from 8 to 12 carbon atoms is peroxyoctanoic acid resulting in a ratio of about 10 to about 1 parts by weight of peroxyacetic acid per each 1 part of carboxylic acid.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein the carboxylic acid is acetic acid.  
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14. The method of claim 1 wherein the carboxylic acid is an alpha-hydroxy mono or dicarboxylic acid having from 3 to 6 carbon atoms.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein the carboxylic acid is lactic acid.  
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16. The method of claim 1 wherein said antimicrobial composition comprises about 2 to 25 parts by weight of hydrogen peroxide per each one million parts of the composition.

17. The method of claim 1 wherein said antimicrobial composition is applied to the carcass by means of a spray.

18. The method of claim 1 wherein said antimicrobial composition is applied to the carcass by means of a fog.

19. The method of claim 1 wherein said antimicrobial composition is applied to the carcass by means of a foam.

20. The method of claim 1 wherein said antimicrobial composition is applied to the carcass by applying in the form of a thickened or gelled solution.

21. The method of claim 1 wherein all or part of the carcass is dipped in said antimicrobial composition.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein a solution comprising the antimicrobial composition is agitated.

23. The method of claim 1 which further includes a vacuum treatment step.

24. The method of claim 1 which further includes the step of applying an activated light source to said carcass.

25. An antimicrobial composition adapted for cleaning and sanitizing animal carcasses comprising:

(a) about 0.5 wt-% to about 20 wt-% of a mixture of one or more peroxycarboxylic acids having from 2 to 4 carbon atoms and one or more peroxycarboxylic acids having from 8 to 12 carbon atoms;

(b) from about 0.5 wt-% to about 60 wt-% of an alpha-hydroxy mono or dicarboxylic acid having from 3 to 6 carbon atoms

- (c) an effective amount of a sequestrant; and  
(d) an effective amount of a hydrotrope.

26. The composition of claim 25 wherein the peroxycarboxylic acid is a  
5 mixture of peroxyacetic acid and peroxyoctanoic or peroxydecanoic acid.

27. The composition of claim 26 wherein the peroxycarboxylic acid is a  
mixture of peroxyacetic acid and peroxyoctanoic acid in a ratio of about 10:1 to about  
1:1.

28. The composition of claim 25 wherein the alpha-hydroxy mono- or  
dicarboxylic acid is lactic acid.

29. The composition of claim 25 which further comprises about 1 wt-% to  
15 about 35 wt-% of hydrogen peroxide.

30. The composition of claim 25 which further comprises from about 0.01  
wt-% to about 10 wt-% of a sequestering agent.

31. The composition of claim 30 wherein the sequestering agent is 1-  
20 hydroxyethylidene-1,1-diphosphonic acid.

32. The composition of claim 25 which further comprises from about 0.1 to  
about 20 wt-% of a hydrotrope.

33. The composition of claim 25 which further comprises from about 0.01 to  
25 about 10 wt-% of a thickening or gelling agent.

34. The composition of claim 25 which further comprises from about 1 to  
30 about 60 wt-% of an organic solvent.

35. An antimicrobial composition adapted for treating animal carcasses consisting essentially of:

- (a) a mixture of peroxyacetic and peroxyoctanoic acid in a ratio of about 10:1 to about 1:1;
- (b) from about 0.1 wt-% to about 10 wt-% of lactic acid;
- (c) from about 4 wt-% to about 10 wt-% of hydrogen peroxide; and
- (d) from about 0.5 wt-% to about 1.5 wt-% of a sequestering agent.

36. The composition of claim 35 wherein the sequestering agent is the sequestering agent is 1-hydroxyethylidene-1,1-diphosphonic acid.

37. A method of treating an animal carcass to reduce a microbial population in resulting cut meat, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) spraying an aqueous antimicrobial treatment composition onto said carcass at a pressure of at least 50 psi at a temperature of up to about 60°C resulting in a contact time of at least 30 seconds, the antimicrobial composition comprising an effective antimicrobial amount comprising least 2 ppm of one or more carboxylic acid, peroxycarboxylic acid or mixtures thereof; and
- (b) achieving at least a one log<sub>10</sub> reduction in the microbial population.

38. The method of claim 37 wherein the antimicrobial composition comprises an effective antimicrobial amount comprising at least 2 ppm of one or more peroxycarboxylic acids having up to 12 carbon atoms; and at least 20 parts of one or more carboxylic acids having up to 18 carbon atoms.

39. The method of claim 37 wherein the peroxycarboxylic acid comprises peroxyacetic acid, peroxyoctanoic acid, peroxydecanoic acid or mixtures thereof.

40. The method of claim 37 wherein the carboxylic acid comprises acetic acid, lactic acid or mixtures thereof.

41. The method of claim 37 wherein the antimicrobial composition  
5 comprises at least about 5 wt% hydrogen peroxide.

42. The method of claim 37 wherein the antimicrobial compositions are applied by means of an electrostatically accelerated spray.

10 43. A method of treating an animal carcass to reduce a microbial population in resulting cut meat, the method comprising the steps of:  
placing the carcass in a chamber at atmospheric pressure;  
filling the chamber with condensing steam comprising an antimicrobial composition for a short duration; and  
15 quickly venting and cooling the chamber to prevent browning of the meat carcass; wherein the duration of the steam thermal process may be from about 5 seconds to about 30 seconds and the chamber temperature may reach from about 50 °C to about 93°C.

20 44. The method of claim 43 wherein the antimicrobial composition comprises an effective antimicrobial amount comprising at least 2 ppm of one or more peroxycarboxylic acids having up to 12 carbon atoms; and at least 20 parts of one or more carboxylic acids having up to 18 carbon atoms.

25 45. The method of claim 44 wherein the peroxycarboxylic acid comprises peroxyacetic acid, peroxyoctanoic acid, peroxydecanoic acid or mixtures thereof.

46. The method of claim 44 wherein the carboxylic acid comprises acetic acid, lactic acid or mixtures thereof.

The method of claim 44 wherein  
at least about 5 wt% hydrogen peroxide

The method of claim 44 wherein  
means of an electrostatically accelerated

5            48.     The method of claim 44 wherein the antimicrobial compositions are  
applied by means of an electrostatically accelerated spray.

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